

HIGH BRIDGE TRAIL STATE PARK  
MASTER PLAN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
IMPLEMENTATION STATUS BRIEFING  
DECEMBER 12, 2007

MINUTES

The meeting was held at the VDOT Training Center in Farmville and began at 2:40 PM. Committee members in attendance were: Delegate Abbitt, Mr. Bartlett, Mr. Craft, Ms. Dixen, Mr. Doswell, Mr. Floyd, Mr. Sorrell, Mr. King, Mr. McKissick, Ms. Morris, Mrs. Wilkins, Ms. Puckett, Mr. and Mrs. Rice, Ms. Schmucker, Mr. Cooper, Ms. Swinson, Mr. Wilcox, and Mr. Wingo. DCR staff present were Mr. Maroon, Mr. Elton, Ms. Zahn, Mr. Hougland, and Mr. Munson.

The purpose of the meeting was to provide a status report on the progress being made on implementing the master plan. Committee members were reminded that at the time they finalized the master plan, only \$500,000 of Transportation Enhancement funds were available and there was no expectation that further funding from the General Assembly was forthcoming. The committee had decided that gaining access for the public to High Bridge was the most critical need, and so the available funding was to be used to provide that access. It was agreed that the Aspen Hill side of the bridge was the best place to locate that access.

When the General Assembly appropriated \$1 million for the park, the opportunity was presented to get a greater portion of the park open to the public and still provide access to High Bridge. The Town of Farmville was very forthcoming with an offer to assist in constructing portions of the trail in town. Delegates Abbitt and Hogan were also very supportive of using the appropriation where it would serve the most people. Therefore, DCR expanded the Phase I project to include all of the Park between the Business 460 bridge on the western side of Farmville and Rice.

The status of progress in implementing the master plan was then presented.

1. The corridor has been secured with gates and signs.
2. The High Bridge Trail State Park manager has been hired and has established an office in Farmville. Eric Hougland was introduced and explained that he is on duty, patrolling the park, and responding to public inquiries.
3. VDOT has agreed to transfer the Green Bay shop to DCR for use as the park maintenance area.
4. DCR has negotiated a contract to purchase land in Rice for a trail head parking and service area.
5. Surveyors have been contracted to set control points and topography and to do some boundary line research between the Business 460 bridge in Farmville and Rice.
6. Consultants have been contracted to conduct an Environmental Impact Review of the corridor and the potential environmental impacts of construction activities.

7. An engineering firm has been employed to evaluate the five bridges in the Phase I section and determine the best approach to converting them for trail use. They will also project the cost for each bridge.
8. DCR has been soliciting advice and specific engineering specifications from VDOT on how best to deal with the large ballast stone and develop a suitable trail surface.
9. Gerry Spates and the Town of Farmville have been very helpful and generous in their offer to help construct the trail section in town, to include an asphalt surface. The town was also generous in allowing trail users to park in public parking lots near the trail. They also offered the use of the Caboose at the Depot for a park office.
10. Longwood University is making progress with their plans for the connector bridge to Lancer Village and will also include a connector trail to the Park.
11. Mitch Bowman and the Civil War Trails folks indicated that they could help with interpretive signs for High Bridge Battlefield.

It was explained to the committee that because DCR did not yet have solid cost estimates for trail surface construction or bridge decking that we could not project at this date how much of the trail we would be able to build with the available funds but that it was our intent to construct as many miles as possible. This could mean that High Bridge might not get decked with these funds, but would have to wait for the next appropriation.

Delegate Abbitt asked DCR staff specific questions about the construction process and timeline which attending staff could not answer with specifics. Mr. Maroon assured Del. Abbitt that the answers would be determined and sent to him soon. Mr. Cooper also asked for a copy of the construction schedule.

The committee was promised that a new addition of the High Bridge Progress newsletter would be published and distributed as soon as we knew how much of the park would be constructed with current funds.

It was mentioned by Mr. Wingo that the Governor had placed funding in his budget for the next year for High Bridge Trail State Park (\$4.5 million was announced on 12-17-07). If this money stays in the budget and gets appropriated by the General Assembly, then we should be able to get a considerable amount of the trail constructed, as well as bridges decked, during the next year or so.

Joe Elton introduced the committee to the Friends of Virginia State Parks and encouraged them to consider starting a Friends group for High Bridge Trail State Park. Interested persons should contact Eric Hougland, Park Manager, at 434-315-1627.

The meeting adjourned at 4:25 PM.